

Child Care Development Block Grant Program and transitional medical assistance for people who leave welfare for work. The bill extends funding for these programs for the next 3 months without any changes in current law. As the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) pointed out, this is the ninth temporary extension for TANF over the last 3 years.

I agree with those who say we should be doing much more. I think it is wrong we have not brought forward legislation that deals with the reality of what has happened in our communities over the past 3 years. We have seen a significant growth in poverty in this country, growing by 4.3 million people. In 2003 alone, almost another 800,000 children fell into poverty; yet we see no action by this body to deal with the realities in our community.

Regrettably, the long-term welfare reauthorization plan put forward by my Republican colleagues largely ignores this problem. The gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) has pointed out that TANF has been remarkably successful, using his own terms; yet the legislation they bring forward radically changes the program by putting more mandates on States and less opportunity to tailor the program to meet the needs of individual States and fails to give the resources necessary in order to accomplish the task.

Instead, they have suggested that poverty is rising because welfare recipients are not working hard enough. However, this suggestion falls flat when Members consider one basic fact: the welfare rolls have been declining as we continue to see an increase in poverty. That points out the fact that there are just no jobs available. We are going through a recession; it is not that we have welfare recipients who are failing to work. They cannot find jobs; and when they do find jobs, these jobs do not pay enough. They need job training and help to move up the economic ladder.

Mr. Speaker, we should be providing more child care assistance, more job training, and a higher minimum wage; and yet in all three of these areas, the majority and President Bush have resisted such reforms. In fact, as the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) points out, the Subcommittee on Human Resources is scheduled to mark up legislation tomorrow which is nearly identical to the same bill we have been debating for the last 3 years. In baseball, it is three strikes and you are out. Unfortunately, that does not apply here; otherwise perhaps we would finally get a bill that would be worthy of bipartisan support. We do not seem to be getting that from the majority.

While we are doing this, the other body is working on legislation, which I am happy to report. As the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) pointed out, the Senate Finance Committee has given a road map by recently reporting a bipartisan bill to improve

TANF. Let me underscore that. The Senate Finance Committee reported a bipartisan bill, a bill that represents give and take among all of the Members of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am not thrilled by all of the provisions in the bill that was marked up, but I think it does allow us to move forward to get a bill to the President's desk. It increases access to education rather than placing new limitations on education and training. It does not double work hours for mothers with young children. It does not include an open-ended superwaiver authority that could reduce protections for food stamps and housing benefits, and includes six times as much new child care funding compared to the bill that will be marked up tomorrow in our committee.

As I said, the Senate finance bill is far from perfect, and I hope it will improve when considered by the full Senate; but it represents a much better approach than the Republican bill in this body. I hope we can continue to work towards a long-term bill that reflects many of the improvements made in the Senate bill.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I support this temporary extension of current law, hope we can work together, and hope we have a bill worthy of bipartisan support we can get to the President.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in 2002 and 2003, this House passed long-term reauthorization legislation to encourage more work among welfare recipients and to provide more resources for States to assist low-income families. I am encouraged that last week the Senate Committee on Finance reported a welfare reform bill. Tomorrow, the subcommittee I chair will mark up long-term reauthorization, and it is my hope that over the next few months we can pass long-term legislation and send a bill to the President for his signature.

But until that happens, it is important that we continue these programs, so we do need to pass this bill. Therefore, I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to support the extension of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant Program through June 30, 2005.

For the ninth time since September 2002, the U.S. House today is attempting to pass another short-term extension of the nation's welfare system, by approving the Welfare Reform Extension Act of 2004 under our suspension calendar.

For the sake of the millions of families that remain in the welfare system, we need a final agreement that will help Americans achieve independence and a brighter future. While I am glad that the House Ways and Means Committee is taking action, it is still disturbing that we must continue to pass extensions rather than create a comprehensive reform that will help families for generations to come.

The 1996 welfare reform law authorized Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and related welfare programs through September 30, 2002. The House passed comprehensive welfare reauthorization bills in 2002 and 2003. The Senate's failure to approve a comprehensive reauthorization bill has forced both bodies to fund welfare programs since September 2002 through a series of short-term extensions, without any further improvements. The last short term extension from March 2004 is set to expire on June 30, 2005, until the U.S. Senate can complete its work.

Every day that passes without a comprehensive agreement means more low-income families depending on governmental assistance. It means less work and job preparation by parents. It means fewer child care and child support resources available to help families. It means more poverty. And it means more families going into debt and creating more obstacles to financial freedom. It's time to deliver on this vital legislation.

As chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, I know that many of the people that will suffer from lack of comprehensive benefits are children. These children are not the ones who are making decisions for the family, but are the ones that are suffering from it. The government must step in and take a proactive role to see that such imbalances are set right. As we reauthorize TANF today, let's go one step further and create a working assistance program that has long term solutions.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETRI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1160.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1160.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

AMENDING INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986 PROVIDING FOR PROPER TAX TREATMENT OF CERTAIN DISASTER MITIGATION PAYMENTS

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1134) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the proper tax treatment of certain disaster mitigation payments.

The Clerk read as follows: